

CHURCHES CONTINUE DOWN THE SLIPPERY SLOPE

May 28, 2014 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article)

The past 15 years has provided many case histories to prove that the adaptation of contemporary worship music places a church on a slippery slope of change and compromise toward a full-blown contemporary stance.

The “slippery slope” has been denied and even ridiculed by many.

For example, consider Brian Fuller, Senior Pastor of Trinity Baptist Church, Concord, New Hampshire, which has been called “the flagship of BJU-FBF (Bob Jones University-Fundamental Baptist Fellowship) in New England.” In a 2012 blog he defended the use of contemporary worship hymns, claiming that the argument that churches should avoid associating with contemporary songwriters because of a slippery-slide effect is “irrelevant, illogical, extra-biblical” (Brian Fuller, “Of Modern Hymnody at Trinity,” Feb. 13, 2012).

Fuller and those who hold this view are whistling in the dark. The evidence of a slippery slope associated with the use of contemporary music is overwhelming.

Consider two examples.

Southside Baptist Church, Greenville, South Carolina

Founded in September 1946, Southside Baptist was pastored by Walt Handford from 1965 to 1996. Handford’s wife Elizabeth is a daughter of the famous fundamentalist preacher John R. Rice, founder of the *Sword of the Lord*, and Southside was an old-fashioned fundamental Baptist church until the 1990s.

That is when *Joyful Woman* magazine, for which Elizabeth Rice Handford was editorial consultant, began to feature ecumenical personalities such as James Dobson and Elisabeth Elliot, both of whom have close, non-critical affiliations with the Roman Catholic Church.

In September 1993, the church hosted Ray Boltz for a CCM concert.

That same year Southside gave up the King James Bible in favor of the NIV. In support of this move, the speaker at Southside for the Sunday evening service, September 12, 1993, was Kenneth Barker, chairman of the New International Version translation committee.

By 1994, the church had a staff member who was employed by the extremely ecumenical Campus Crusade for Christ. In an interview with *Charisma* magazine in 2001, Campus Crusade founder Bill Bright described his philosophy: “I have felt that God led me many years ago to build bridges. I’m a Presbyterian . . . and yet I work with everybody who loves Jesus, whether they be

charismatic or Catholic, Orthodox or mainliners. ... I'm not an evangelical. I'm not a fundamentalist."

In 1996, Charles Boyd became pastor of Southside. He is a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, both of which are New Evangelical to the core. Under his direction, Southside changed its name to Southside Fellowship (also called Fellowship Greenville).

Today the church is a full-blown rock & roll contemporary church with the darkened worship stage and big screen monitors.

Caedmon's Call performed at Southside in February 2008, which is very telling as to the church's direction. Caedmon's Call's greatest love in music is secular rock, having mentioned Indigo Girls, Shawn Colvin, David Wilcox, The Police, Fishbone, 10,000 Maniacs (*Lighthouse Electronic Magazine*). The group often performs Beatles music. The band's leader, Cliff Young, said one of his favorites is the foul-mouthed Alanis Morissette. He mocked a preacher who warns that Christian musicians should not listen to secular rock and said that he listens to secular rock & rollers because "they are being honest [about] struggles that they go through."

Caedmon's Call performs for the Metro Bible Study, which represents 128 churches in Houston, Texas. The speaker for the Metro Bible Study is David Edwards, a Pentecostal who was on the steering committee of the North American Renewal Service Committee, which sponsored several ecumenical-charismatic congresses. I attended two of these (New Orleans '87 and Indianapolis '90) with press credentials. Half of the tens of thousands in attendance were Roman Catholic, and many Roman Catholic priests were featured as speakers. A Catholic mass was conducted every morning.

It is obvious that Southside Fellowship has moved very far from its former position and is swimming in dangerous spiritual waters.

I would call this powerful evidence of a "slippery slope of compromise."

Landmark Baptist Church, Cincinnati, Ohio

Landmark Baptist Church, Cincinnati, Ohio, used to be an "old-fashioned" Baptist church with high standards of music and dress and a stance against the modern versions.

In the 1990s, the church took a turn away from its roots and at the heart of this change was music. In 1996, the church brought in a Campus Crusade band playing "high energy '50s and '60s rock and roll."

In 2001, Mat Holman became the pastor. The church's web site said, "Being a firm believer that church should be fun and on the edge, Matt puts all his energy into making Landmark a place where everyone belongs."

The church now features a teen ministry called EnterRuption. “The purpose of EnterRuption is to create a relevant environment for students to bring their friends. We utilize a live band (secular and Christian music), dramas, skits and a relevant message.”

The pop group Jump5 performed at Landmark Baptist on Dec. 6, 2003. “The music of the Nashville-based group is thoroughly modern pop, high-spirited and 100% fun.”

To document just how far Landmark Baptist has fallen from its past stance, we note that David Crowder Band performed there in November 2009. Crowder co-founded University Baptist Church in Waco, Texas, with Chris Seay, an emerging pastor who believes the Bible contains many errors (Seay, *Faith of My Fathers*, pp. 81-86). He says: “I love the Bible, and I believe it’s perfect in every way IT NEEDS TO BE. But I serve a living God, not a canon” (p. 86). In January 2012, Crowder made a “surprise appearance” to lead worship for the send-off of Rob Bell at Mars Hill Bible Church in Grandville, Michigan (“Rob Bell Received a Tearful Farewell,” *Christian Post*, Jan. 9, 2012). This was Bell’s final Sunday service at the church he founded 12 years earlier before launching out on a new venture. Crowder thus put his blessing on Bell’s many rank heresies, including his denial that the Bible is the infallible Word of God and his denial of the eternal judgment of hell. In his 2011 book *Love Wins*, Bell preaches near-universalism, as well as a false god, a false christ, a false gospel, a false heaven, and a false hell.

In a mere 10 years, Landmark Baptist has flashed down the slippery slope to land in the dangerous waters of end-time apostasy.

Many Have Warned about the Slippery Slope of Contemporary Music

The late Gordon Sears, who had an evangelistic music ministry for many years and ministered with Rudy Atwood, was saddened before his death by the dramatic change that was occurring in many fundamental Baptist churches. He warned:

“When the standard of music is lowered, then the standard of dress is also lowered. When the standard of dress is lowered, then the standard of conduct is also lowered. When the standard of conduct is lowered, then the sense of value in God’s truth is lowered” (Sears, *Songfest Newsletter*, April 2001).

Dr. Frank Garlock of Majesty Music has warned,

“If a church starts using CCM it will eventually lose all other standards” (Bob Jones University, chapel, March 12, 2001).

The late fundamentalist leader Dr. Ernest Pickering gave a similar warning:

“Perhaps nothing precipitates a slide toward New Evangelicalism more than the introduction of Contemporary Christian Music. This inevitably leads toward a gradual slide in other areas as well until the entire church is infiltrated by ideas and programs alien to the original position of the church” (Pickering, *The Tragedy of Compromise: The Origin and Impact of the New Evangelicalism*, Bob Jones University Press, 1994).

Victor Sears called Contemporary Christian Music “the Trojan Horse of the ecumenical movement.”

“Good fundamental Baptists and others that refuse the teachings of the charismatic crowd concerning tongues, signs, miracles, and so forth are now singing their music in our churches and preparing our people for the world, the flesh and the devil. It is the new Trojan Horse move ... to deaden our churches to spiritual truth” (Sears, *Baptist Bible Tribune*, 1981).

We can see this happening on every hand today.

The reason is that contemporary worship music is not just music. Even when its lyrics are biblical and its rock rhythm is toned down, it represents a philosophy of Christianity that is opposed to what Biblicist churches stand for. It is a philosophy that is opposed separation from the world, opposed to ecclesiastical separation.

The writers of the old hymns, though they were not all Baptist in theology, did not represent a movement that was brashly opposed to old-fashioned, Biblicist, separatist Christianity, whereas the contemporary worship crowd most definitely does represent such a movement.

Dan Lucarini, author of *Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement: Confessions of a Former Worship Leader*, says:

“NO ONE SHOULD DENY THE POWER OF MUSIC TO PROSELYTIZE! Pastors in particular must defend their flocks from false teaching, heresies and ‘ear ticklers’ who bring worldly sensuality into the congregation; you are right to point out how easily this comes into a church through worship music. IT SEEMS WISER TO DECLINE THE USE OF WHAT SEEMS TO BE A PERFECTLY GOOD SONG, RATHER THAN TO GIVE ANY HONOR AND HINT OF ENDORSEMENT TO THE COMPOSER AND HIS/HER MISSION” (e-mail, May 24, 2009).

Churches that neglect the subject of music and consider it a “non-essential” issue do so to their spiritual detriment.

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